

March 18, 2005

TO: Chief School Administrators

FROM: Ellen Frede, Ph.D.
Assistant to the Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood Education

RE: Early Launch to Learning Funding Opportunity, 2005-2006

I am pleased to announce that the Early Launch to Learning Initiative appears in the FY 2006 budget, providing an exciting opportunity to continue the valuable work supported by these funds. The Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) will increase access to preschool for four-year-olds statewide. In March 2005, the Department of Education is calling for new and renewal applicants for the ELLI award to provide and expand access to high-quality preschool for low-income children in New Jersey.

The Office of Early Childhood Education is now able to reopen this funding opportunity to a new round of potential applicants as well as to districts that previously received ELLI funding. Funding is dependent on approval by the state legislature. All districts who serve elementary-aged children are encouraged to apply. Districts may form partnerships or consortia to operate preschool programs. Level of funding is based on the number of low-income children to be served. Districts already providing preschool through other funding sources are eligible to apply for funding to cover all income-eligible children if they plan to expand their program. Districts receiving Early Childhood Program Aid, with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half-day to full-day programs. Classes should be in operation by the first day of school in September 2005.

The long term aim of ELLI is to provide access to high-quality preschool for all four-year-olds in New Jersey by 2010. The interest to the taxpayers of New Jersey is clear. High-quality preschool results in savings to society over time and improves the quality of life, not only for the participants and their families, but for the communities as a whole. Currently, too many children are in low-quality care, and parents have great difficulty finding and paying for good educational experiences for their young children.

The appropriation of \$4,000,000 for FY 2006 if approved will fund approximately 1,000 low-income children's participation, through a competitive award process. Other children will

be paid for through braided funding, using a combination of existing district funds (general fund or other funds), collaboration with Head Start and child care, and parent tuition. The classes will comprise children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children supported through other means.

Detailed information and instructions for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative are available on the Department of Education Web site at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/elli/>. Please address all questions to Karen Nemeth at Karen.nemeth@doe.state.nj.us.